

Greater Washington

Edition
of the
Washington
Times
Sunday January 28 1906



EVERY citizen of the Capital City is aglow with the possibilities of a Greater Washington. It is in the atmosphere we breathe; it is the theme of conversation on the street corner, in the hotel lobby, in the corridors of the Capitol; it is the topic of discussion in the drawing room, and the places of amusement.

This discussion is deeper than the idle talk of an egotistical population. Though we may not recognize it, it is the awakening to a consciousness that our city—the city of the nation's center—has before it the record of the ages to stimulate and encourage.

Given certain proportions and formulas the mathematician obtains invariable results. The chemist, by combining certain chemicals in fixed proportion and under certain conditions, secures a foreknown compound. So the logical historian can forecast events if he is aware of the conditions that exist at the present time. The laws which govern and control the human race in the aggregate are as fixed and unchangeable as those of the "Medes and Persians." Man is the same today as he was in the yesterday of a thousand years ago and as he will be in the thousands of years of tomorrow. This statement should not be construed to mean that there is no advancement for the future, and that there has been none in the past. On the contrary, the fixed law of the human race is advancement. But the exterior conditions in the body politic of a nation bring forth peculiar actions on the part of the individuals comprising that nation, and it is these conditions to which attention is invited.

THE LOGIC OF DEVELOPMENT.

With this hypothesis what may be said subsequently with regard to the future greatness of Washington must be viewed in a different light from the common boast among cities, towns, and villages to the effect that in each instance theirs is the coming metropolis of the nation. Such statements are not to be condemned, for it gives evidence of a commendable local pride in each of these communities, but it requires a Gulliver-like stretch of the imagination to see any basis for the roseate view of the future taken by some of our more or less pretentious and visionary American municipalities.

There seems to be a spirit of "Greater" abroad throughout the land, and surely this is an encouraging sign for the nation as a whole. Washingtonians are not jealous of the growth of any sister city, and we glory in the bright prospects which many entertain.

Washington, however, occupies a unique position in this age of growth and prosperity. Its citizens have the spirit of hopefulness that dominates the nation as a whole. It has also the same advantages of which many cities boast; it has many more than some. But aside from all this and infinitely more important, it has the record of history to stand sponsor for the statement that this, our National Capital, is to be the city of cities in the nation of nations.

This may sound more or less preposterous to some of our opulent municipalities, who, like overgrown boys, do not know how to handle themselves. But let us turn for a moment to the records of other nations and see what is to be found to uphold such an assertion.

POPULATION SEEKS CAPITALS.

There is not a nation in all Europe in which the capital city is not the metropolis. England has London; France, Paris; Germany, Berlin; Russia, St. Petersburg; Austria, Vienna; Italy, Rome, and even Turkey, Constantinople. Yet of all these cities none possesses the natural advantages that some of the other cities in their countries have. For example, Liverpool or Dover might naturally be expected to be the center of activity of England, or, perhaps, Birmingham, with its vast quantities of coal and iron at its doors. In France who will gainsay the statement that Bordeaux or Marseilles has not been more favored by Dame Nature? The same thing may be said of Berlin and Hamburg, and of Moscow and Odessa as compared with St. Petersburg; or of Naples with respect to Rome.

Neither can it be claimed for these capitals of Europe that they owe their predominance in population to the fact that they were the first cities settled. Marseilles was a thriving port town long before Charlemagne planted his standard upon the present site of Paris. Dover was the camping ground of the British, and likewise of the conquering Romans long before London town was dreamed of. Moscow was once the thriving center of all the Russias. But its position of pre-emi-

nence has been long since appropriated by the ice-bound city of the Czar on the banks of the Neva. Sybaris was the ancient city of the Latins before Romulus and Remus were born. Berlin became the heart of the German empire only after Prussia took the lead of the confederation of small Teutonic principalities.

A QUESTION ANSWERED.

Need the question be asked as to the reason for the growth of these European municipalities? It is self-evident that population, industries, and financial predominance have followed the seat of government. This has not been accomplished in a day or a year or a hundred years. The movement toward the home of the nation's government has been almost imperceptible in every case, yet it has been as certain and as sweeping as the tides of the ocean. This is history.

If we are scientific students of history, what are we to infer as to the future of this city? Do conditions differ here in any respect from those of Paris, or London, or Berlin, or St. Petersburg? As a matter of fact the conditions are peculiarly analogous not merely in the national temperament and internal forces at work along similar lines, but in physical surroundings as well. We have here a city, laid out upon a generous plan, at the head of navigation of one of the large rivers of the Appalachian slope. Paris, situated on the Seine, Berlin on the Spree, London on the Thames, St. Petersburg on the Neva, and Rome on the Tiber present striking similarities. The difference between the European capitals and Washington lies only in the matter of present-day population.

There are a score or more American cities that surpass the National Capital in population today; but is this any ground for the inference that we are always to occupy such a position? Such a contention is utterly untenable. As peoples of other nations have gradually

mobilized at the seat of government, so may we expect the same agency to bring about a continued growth of Washington. Such a position may appear strained because so many American cities have gained such a lead in point of population, due in some instances to their age, in others to their natural advantages, and in still other cases to the fact that they have been the heart of some rapidly developing agricultural section which has poured into these cities the commerce of entire States and Territories. These are the cities which have attained a marvelous growth in a single night, like Jack-the-Giant-Killer's bean stalk. Let us hope that their prosperity and growth may continue. But these boom days are practically over and the growth of cities will be along well ordered and normal lines from now on. One cannot but come to the conclusion that gradually men will be drawn into the vortex of interest at the seat of National Government.

THE INTEREST OF THE LAYMAN.

There must necessarily always exist in the mind of the average man a deep and abiding interest in his government. This is not merely a matter of patriotism, but embraces that fundamental principle of psychology known to the pedants as the law that "all action is primarily teleological," and which the layman has embraced in the old adage that "self-preservation is the first law of nature." The trend of population toward the Capital is a demonstration of the truth of this maxim, for what is of greater importance to a citizen's welfare in point of "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness" than a thorough understanding of the